

XXI.—*Additional Notes on the Ornithology of Transvaal.*

By THOMAS AYRES. Communicated by JOHN HENRY GURNEY\*.

[In the volume of 'The Ibis' for 1877, at p. 491, I corrected an accidental error in the enumeration of the species of birds observed in Transvaal by Mr. Thomas Ayres. Since then I have detected a slight additional error, one species having been enumerated twice. This having been corrected, the number hitherto observed by Mr. Ayres stands as 281; and the additional species included in the following notes are numbered consecutively from that figure. Those species which are not numbered are such as have been previously mentioned.—J. H. G.]

AQUILA RAPAX (Temm.). Tawny Eagle.

Male, shot 12th July. Total length 26 inches, bill  $2\frac{1}{2}$ , tarsus  $3\frac{3}{4}$ , wing  $19\frac{1}{2}$ , tail  $10\frac{1}{2}$ . Irides light tawny brown; bill black, gradually changing to pale yellowish-ash towards the base; cere, gape, and feet light chrome-yellow, claws black. Weight 5 lb.

This bird was brought to me by one of the Potchefstroom butchers; it frequented the slaughter-yard for some time, feeding on the offal of the cattle and sheep; its last meal consisted of some dead putrid fowl it had picked up, and my olfactories were sorely tried whilst skinning it. It is evidently a very foul-feeding bird; a horrible stench permeated its whole body, besides the musky smell noticeable also in the Vultures. This is the only specimen I have fallen in with for a long time.

[A typical specimen, assuming the adult dress on the head and mantle, but otherwise in immature plumage.—J. H. G.]

CIRCAETUS PECTORALIS, Smith. Black-breasted Harrier Eagle.

Female, shot 11th June, in full adult plumage. Irides light yellow; bill pale bluish horn-colour, darkest towards the tip; tarsi and feet dingy white. Weight  $3\frac{1}{2}$  lb.

\* See Ibis, 1877, pp. 339-354.

This species breeds at this season. A few days since a nest was found in a thorn tree, about eight miles from Potchefstroom, containing one egg, much incubated.

282. *TINNUNCULUS CENCHRIS* (Naum.). European Lesser Kestrel.

Male, shot 27th December, from a flight of about fifty birds.

[In immature plumage, but with a few adult feathers appearing on the mantle, throat, and upper breast.—J. H. G.]

*CHICQUERA RUFICOLLIS* (Swains.). African Rufous-necked Falcon.

Male, shot 29th May. Total length  $12\frac{3}{8}$  inches.

Female, shot 29th May; the mate of the above. Total length  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches.

283. *MELIERAX NIGER* (Bonn. & Vieill.). African Black Hawk.

Male, shot 31st July.

This bird was given to me by my friend Mr. Rex, who shot it amongst some mimosa trees on the banks of the Vaal river, some four-and-twenty miles from Potchefstroom. It is an exceedingly scarce species in this country.

The following description was taken by me four days after the bird was killed :—Total length 13 inches, bill  $\frac{3}{4}$ , tarsus  $2\frac{1}{8}$ , wing  $7\frac{3}{8}$ , tail 6. Irides apparently bright-red hazel; bill black; gape, basal portion of bill, and cere bright dark orange-red; tarsi and feet bright brick-red, dashed with dusky brown on the upper surfaces; claws black.

[This specimen appears to me to be an adult but not very old male; the number of pale transverse bars on the middle rectrices is four.—J. H. G.]

Female, shot near Potchefstroom on the 19th of August by my brother, who noted down the following description at the time :—It was a solitary bird, and was found amongst low mimosa trees. Total length  $14\frac{1}{2}$  inches, tarsus 2, wing  $8\frac{3}{4}$ , tail 7. Bill black, with the base red; tarsi and feet black, with the under surfaces orange-red; irides brown.

[This, I think, is evidently a younger bird than the pre-

ceding specimen; the pale transverse bars on the middle rectrices are five in number.—J. H. G.]

Female, shot on the 30th of July, in mimosa bush in the Rustenberg district, by my friend Mr. William Lucas, who gave it to me. Total length  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches, wing  $8\frac{1}{4}$ . Irides dark red; cere orange-red; tip of bill dark horn-colour; tarsi and feet red, claws black. The throat contained the bones and flesh of a small bird.

[This is apparently a very fully adult bird, the black colour of the plumage being deeper and richer than in the two preceding specimens, and the light transverse bands on the middle rectrices being but three in number and only the central one reaching across the feather; they are also tinged with dark grey, instead of with brown as in the other two examples.—J. H. G.]

CIRCUS MACRURUS (Gmel.). Swainson's Harrier.

Male. Irides pale yellow.

Female. Irides dusky hazel.

[The above-named female appears to me to be adult; the male is decidedly so.—J. H. G.]

CIRCUS CINERACEUS (Mont.). Montagu's Harrier.

Male adult, shot 14th March. Irides bright gamboge-yellow.

This individual was exceedingly fat; and its stomach was crammed with grasshoppers.

CIRCUS RANIVORUS (Daud.). South-African Marsh-Harrier.

Male, adult. Total length  $18\frac{3}{4}$  inches, bill  $1\frac{3}{8}$ , tarsus  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , wing  $14\frac{1}{2}$ , tail  $8\frac{3}{4}$ . Irides pale gamboge; bill black, bluish at the base; cere greenish yellow; tarsi and feet light orange-yellow.

Female, adult, shot on the 25th of October from her nest, containing three chalky-white eggs very faintly tinged with grey. The nest was placed on a mass of thick sedges bent over the swamp, and about three feet above the water; it was composed partly of the sedge and partly of small sticks.



Total length 20 inches, bill  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , tarsus  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , wing 15, tail  $9\frac{3}{4}$ . Irides tawny yellow; bill and cere as in the male; tarsi and feet pale greenish yellow, with a dusky tinge. The crop contained the remains of a large rat.

Female, immature, shot 11th June. Irides dusky brown. The crop contained the remains of a Snipe, probably a wounded bird.

PHASMOPTYNX CAPENSIS (Smith). African Short-eared Owl.

Female, shot 24th May. Irides hazel.

Female, shot 2nd June. Irides dusky hazel-brown.

284. STRIX AFFINIS, Layard (ex Blyth). South-African Screech-Owl.

Female, shot 23rd January. Total length 13 inches, bill (fully)  $1\frac{3}{8}$ , tarsus  $2\frac{3}{4}$ , wing  $10\frac{3}{4}$ , tail  $4\frac{3}{4}$ . Irides dark hazel; bill pale flesh-colour, clouded more or less about the commissure; cere pale chrome-yellow; feet dusky.

The Screech-Owl is not uncommon in the town of Potchefstroom.

[The Screech-Owl of South Africa, though united by Mr. Sharpe, in his recent 'Catalogue of the Striges,' with *Strix flammea*, appears to me to be separable as a subspecies from the European race, from which it is distinguished (more or less conspicuously in different individuals) by the greater abundance and larger size of the dark spots on the entire under surface.

In my edition of Andersson's 'Notes on the Birds of Damara Land,' I applied to the South-African race the specific name of "*poensis*," founded on a West-African specimen; but, according to the observations of Prof. Bocage ('Ornithologie d'Angola,' vol. i. p. 63), some West-African specimens occur which do not differ from those of Europe; and it may therefore be better to adopt for the South-African race the specific name of "*affinis*," applied to it by Mr. Layard in the first edition of his work on the Birds of South Africa.

The present specimen differs from ordinary South-African examples in the very grey colouring of the mantle, in the larger size of the black spots on the sides of the neck, and

also in the circumstance of the conspicuous black spots on the interscapular feathers being almost entirely free from the intermixture of white, with which these spots are usually varied both in *S. assimilis* and in *S. flammea*.

I may add that this last peculiarity is wanting in an otherwise very similar Transvaal specimen preserved in the British Museum, and described by Mr. Sharpe in his interesting paper on the Geographical Distribution of the Barn-Owls (*vide* 'Ornithological Miscellany,' vol. i. p. 289).

In the same paper Mr. Sharpe remarks that the Barn-Owl "does not seem to have been procured in Natal by Mr. Ayres or by any other collector." This, however, is not entirely accurate, as the Norwich Museum possesses an adult male obtained in Natal by Mr. Gueinzus. It is a bird of the ordinary South-African type, and does not present any remarkable peculiarities.—J. H. G.]

285. *MEROPS SUPERCILIOSUS*, Linn. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater.

Male, shot 12th April. Irides crimson; bill black; tarsi and feet pale dusky.

286. *DICROCERCUS HIRUNDINACEUS* (Vieill.). Swallow-tailed Bee-eater.

Male and female, shot 2nd June. Irides bright crimson; bill black; tarsi and feet greyish dusky.

This pair I shot in my garden amongst the fruit-trees; they appeared to sit stationary on a bough, and every now and then to dart upon any insect flying past that took their fancy. Their stomachs were well-filled with bluebottles.

These are the first birds of the kind I have seen in this part of the country.

287. *HIRUNDO DIMIDIATA*, Sundev. Pearly-breasted Swallow.

Male, shot in August in the Marico district, the first of these Swallows that I have met with in Transvaal.

*HIRUNDO ALBIGULA*, Bp. White-throated Swallow.

Irides very dark umber-brown; bill black; tarsi and feet dusky black. This is the first of the migratory Swallows to

appear in Transvaal. One specimen sent was shot on the 16th of August, 1877, being one of the first individuals that arrived; the other specimen sent was shot on the 21st of January.

† *HIRUNDO RUSTICA*, Linn. Chimney-Swallow.

Male, shot 13th March.

Male, shot 3rd November, then in small flights.

[Both these specimens appear to be adult: that shot on 13th March is in full plumage, with the vinous tint on the underparts below the pectoral collar well developed; the other, killed on 3rd November, appears to be moulting, and is much less richly coloured both above and below, the absence of the vinous tint on the under surface being especially noticeable and almost complete; the external pair of rectrices are of the full length in both individuals.—J. H. G.]

*COTYLE CINCTA* (Bodd.). Brown-collared Martin.

Sex uncertain, shot at Potchefstroom, 19th April.

*ANTHOSCOPUS CAPENSIS* (Gmel.). Cape Dwarf Tit.

Shot 15th May, on the rocky ranges near Potchefstroom. Stomach contained a species of smooth-skinned caterpillar.

These birds are found on the scrubby hill-ranges, creeping and hopping actively about the leaves and tips of the mimosas.

*SYLVIETTA RUFESCENS* (Vieill.). Short-tailed Bush-Warbler.

This species, according to my brother, is not at all uncommon in the Marico district; and Mr. Lucas found it plentiful in Swart-Ruggens and Rustenberg district.

*EREMOMELA FLAVIVENTRIS* (Burch.). Yellow-bellied Bush-Warbler.

Male. Total length  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches, bill  $\frac{1}{2}$  (barely), tarsus  $\frac{13}{16}$ , wing  $2\frac{1}{4}$ , tail  $1\frac{9}{16}$ . Irides bright hazel; bill dusky, but rather pale on the under mandible towards the gape; tarsi and feet dusky, nearly black.

This species frequents the rocky ranges near Potchefstroom.

[The above measurements of the male bird are all, with the exception of the bill, a little larger than those of the



female given by Mr. Ayres in 'The Ibis' for 1871, p. 153.—  
J. H. G.]

288. *PHYLLOSCOPUS TROCHILUS* (Linn.). British Willow-Warbler.

Two specimens sent: one shot 26th December, the other 28th March.

[I am indebted to my friend Mr. Henry Seebohm for permission to publish the following remarks with which he has favoured me respecting these two specimens:—

"The skin dated 26th December is, for the most part, in abraded plumage, but still shows the yellow underparts, which this species assumes in its autumnal moult before leaving its summer's quarters. Some of the primaries and tail-feathers have evidently been just renewed; but most of them are ragged and torn, especially at the ends.

"The other skin, dated 28th March, is in perfect plumage, with the pale tips to the primaries unabraded, and with the underparts of the pale yellow colour (almost white on the belly) which this bird shows when it reaches us in spring.

"These two skins seem to prove, what has been denied by many English ornithologists, that the Willow-Warblers moult in their winter quarters as well as before their departure from our shores."

The 28th of March seems to me to be a singularly late date for this species to be found still lingering so far south as Transvaal.—J. H. G.]

289. *SYLVIA SALICARIA* (Linn.). Garden-Warbler.

Male, shot on the rocky ranges near Potchefstroom on 27th December, 1876, and two females, shot 10th January, 1877, also near Potchefstroom.

One of the females contained in the stomach portions and seeds of figs.

290. *ACROCEPHALUS SCHÆNOBÆNUS* (Linn.). British Sedge-Warbler.

Two specimens sent: one shot on the 10th, the other on the 18th of April; the stomach of the former contained delicate insects.

This species entirely inhabits the dense sedges of our swamps, where it hides pretty carefully, but towards evening appears a little more boldly, to feed amongst the sedges on the edges of the little rivulets.

[Other specimens of this Warbler from Transvaal have recently been acquired by the British Museum.—J. H. G.]

291. *ACROCEPHALUS ARUNDINACEUS* (Linn.). European Greater Reed-Warbler.

*Acrocephalus fulvolateralis*, Sharpe\*.

Male, shot at Potchefstroom, 27th March. Total length 8 inches, bill 1, tarsus  $1\frac{1}{4}$  (fully), wing  $3\frac{3}{8}$ , tail 3. Head slightly crested; irides pale dusky hazel; bill dusky, excepting a considerable portion of the lower mandible, which gradually pales from the tip to the gape; inside of mouth bright orange-red; tarsi and feet pale ash-colour, soles of the feet very pale yellow. Stomach contained insects.

This is here the scarcest species of the genus; I have only occasionally seen them in the hedgerows of the town, principally among the low fig-trees, never amongst the reeds or sedges of the open country.

[The specimen sent is in moult, and agrees with the type of *A. fulvolateralis* in the British Museum; but Mr. Seebohm informs me that he does not consider the latter to be specifically distinct from the European *A. arundinaceus*; and, so far as I can judge, this opinion is well founded.—J. H. G.]

*ACROCEPHALUS BÆTICATUS* (Vieill.). Lesser South-African Reed-Warbler.

Female, shot 27th April. Irides pale ashy brown; bill pale, but dusky along the ridge and on the tip of the under mandible; tarsi and feet light yellowish ash-colour.

This little Warbler appears in the spring, and remains all through the summer. It is here now (23rd October), enlivening the place with its constant babbling. It appears to stick pretty much to the pollard willows in the hedgerows of the town; but it also frequents the rose-hedges and sometimes the reeds along the hedgerows. The numbers of in-

\* *Vide* 2nd edition of Layard's 'Birds of South Africa,' p. 280.



sects which frequent the honey-dews on the pollard willows, for weeks together, appear to attract it. It is very retiring, and difficult to see amongst the dense foliage, where it sits and babbles for hours together. The hen bird has a short harsh note of alarm.

[Some remarks of Mr. Ayres in 'The Ibis' for 1865, p. 266, which were intended to apply to this species, have been erroneously referred by Captain Shelley in 'The Ibis' for 1875, p. 72, and by Mr. Sharpe in the second edition of Layard's 'Birds of South Africa,' p. 292, to *A. palustris*.

Mr. Seebohm has called my attention to the fact that this species comes exceedingly close to *A. dumetorum*, a native of Eastern Europe and of some parts of Asia, and has kindly furnished me with the following remarks on this subject:—

“At the first glance, *Acrocephalus baticatus* seems to be the same bird as *A. dumetorum*; both are about the same size, the relative lengths of the wing-primaries are the same, and there is no difference in the respective lengths of the bastard primary or of the culmen. It is true that the colour of the upper part of *A. baticatus* is more of a coffee-brown, whilst in *A. dumetorum* the colour is more of an olive-brown; but that is exactly what we might reasonably expect to be the difference between summer and winter plumage.

“The argument from the known facts of geographical distribution is all on the side of the identity of the two species. All the dated skins of *A. baticatus* which I have seen were obtained in South Africa between October and April. *A. dumetorum* is found in Russia, from St. Petersburg to the Ural, from June to September; it also breeds in North Turkestan, in Siberia, and in the Himalayas, and it winters in the plains of India.

“I am inclined, however, to admit the distinctness of the two species. A careful examination and comparison of seventeen skins of *A. baticatus* and twenty skins of *A. dumetorum* leads to the following results:—The colour of the upper parts of *A. baticatus* is decidedly more of a coffee-brown than is the case with the skins of *A. dumetorum* in summer plumage, and perceptibly more so than is the case with the skins of the latter bird in winter plumage; in fact the difference in colour

between these two birds is precisely the same in character as that between *A. streperus* and *A. palustris*. I find, also, that *A. baticatus* is a trifle the smaller bird: my smallest measurement of length of wing is 2.18 inches, a second skin measures 2.2, four others 2.25, six others 2.3, one other 2.33, two others 2.38, one other 2.4, and the largest 2.48; in *A. dume-torum* my smallest measurement of length of wing is 2.33, two others measure 2.35, seven others 2.4, five others 2.45, one other 2.48, and the four largest 2.5. . . .

“The difference of the nesting-habits of the two birds, if verified by future observations (compare ‘Ibis,’ 1869, p. 291, with ‘Stray Feathers,’ 1875, p. 352), is additional evidence of their distinctness; and the fact of *A. baticatus* breeding in Africa is strong evidence that it does not leave that country for this purpose.”

In addition to Mr. Ayres’s description of the nesting of *A. baticatus*, referred to by Mr. Seebohm in the above remarks, some further notes on the same subject will be found in the second edition of Layard’s ‘Birds of South Africa,’ p. 290.—J. H. G.]

BRADYPTERUS GRACILIROSTRIS (Hartl.). White-breasted Reed-Warbler.

This is the most plentiful of our Reed-Warblers, and the principal songster; it may be heard pretty constantly, and must be looked for almost only amongst the reeds bordering our rivers and small streams, being only now and then found amongst the sedges.

CISTICOLA CHINIANA (Smith). Kurichane Fantail.

This species frequents the rocky ranges near Potchefstroom; in its food it does not confine itself to very small insects.

Measurements of two males and three females:—

|                              | Total<br>length. | Wing.           | Bill.          | Tarsus.         | Tail.                       |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
|                              | in.              | in.             | in.            | in.             | in.                         |
| ♂, shot 6th June . . . . .   | 5 $\frac{3}{4}$  | 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$  | $\frac{7}{8}$   | 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ (barely)    |
| ♂, shot in August . . . . .  | ....             | 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ | $\frac{3}{8}$  | $\frac{4}{5}$   | 2 $\frac{7}{10}$            |
| ♀, shot April 23rd . . . . . | ....             | 2               | $\frac{9}{16}$ | $\frac{13}{16}$ | } (imperfect<br>from moult) |
| ♀, shot May 28th . . . . .   | 5 $\frac{1}{4}$  | 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ | $\frac{9}{16}$ | $\frac{13}{16}$ |                             |
| ♀, shot June 6th . . . . .   | 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  | 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ | $\frac{9}{16}$ | $\frac{5}{8}$   |                             |

[The difference in size between the sexes in this species appears to be more marked than in some of its congeners.—J. H. G.]

*CISTICOLA CURSITANS* (Frankl.). European Fantail.

Shot near Potchefstroom, 14th July.

At this season these birds are to be found frequenting swampy ground—in fact, among the Snipes ; probably insects are now scarce in their usual dry haunts in the higher open country.

*AEDON PÆNA* (Smith). Smith's Chat-Warbler.

Male, shot 19th February, on the rocky ranges near Potchefstroom.

[This specimen is not fully adult, and is interesting as exhibiting some remains of immature plumage about the back of the head and neck, the lesser and median wing-coverts, and the lower part of the back. On all these parts the feathers belonging to the immature plumage are of a very pale fulvous tint, edged (and on the wing-coverts also centred) with blackish brown.—J. H. G.]

292. *SAXICOLA PILEATA* (Gmel.). Imitative Wheatear.

Male, shot 7th June, in open country near Potchefstroom. Stomach contained beetles and other insects.

Some of these birds are much bothered with ticks, that fasten themselves in numbers about the head and ears of the bird, which seems quite unable to get rid of them. How the bird can live with sometimes as many as twenty good-sized ticks sucking blood from its head and ears is a wonder.

293. *SAXICOLA LEUCOMELÆNA*, Burch. Burchell's Wheat-eat.

*Male and female.* Female with a black head, its mate with a grey head ; sexes ascertained by my brother, by whom the pair were shot, near Potchefstroom, in the month of August.

[So much uncertainty attaches to the variations of plumage in this Wheatear that it may be desirable to add a description of these specimens, and of two others that were sent with them :—

*Male.* Wing 4·6 inches, tail 2·5, culmen ·6, tarsus 1·2.



The whole plumage is of a deep lustrous black, with the following exceptions:—The entire crown of the head is dark grey, with minute blackish shaft-marks throughout, except upon the hinder part; the nape of the neck is of a similar grey, mingled with a few black feathers; the lesser wing-coverts are pure white, with the bases of the feathers black and expanding into conspicuous black centres on the exterior feathers round the carpal joint and for about three quarters of an inch below it; the scapular feathers adjoining the white coverts are edged with white on the exterior web, and in some instances on both webs; there is a small white spot near the edge of the wing and in a line with the origin of the bastard wing; the rump is white, but the lowest row of upper tail-coverts is black, with white bases and minute white tips: the tail has one of the outer rectrices imperfect and only showing a white base; the corresponding feather is entirely white except a black patch on each web near the end of the feather, that on the outer web being about twice as long as the other; the second pair (reckoning from the outside) are similar, but with the black patch on the inner web the larger of the two; the third and fourth pairs are also similar, but with the black patch extending along the whole of the inner web; the fifth pair are black, with only the base of the outer web white; the central pair are entirely black: the abdomen and crissum are white, slightly mingled with black; bill, legs, and feet black.

*Female.* Wing 4·7 inches, tail 2·7, culmen ·7, tarsus 1·2. In coloration this specimen only differs from the male in the following particulars:—The head is entirely a deep lustrous black, with no intermixture of grey; the small white spot near the root of the bastard wing is less conspicuous, being so small as to be hardly observable; the lowest row of upper tail-coverts have no white tips, but their white bases are larger than those in the male bird; some of the tibial feathers are also slightly tipped with white.

The distribution of black and white on the wings and tail is almost entirely identical in the two specimens.

A third specimen has the following memorandum attached

to it by Mr. Ayres :—" Shot April 4th, on the rocky ranges near Potchefstroom ; sex by dissection uncertain ; contents of stomach, insects and seeds of wild fruits ; iris dusky ; bill, tarsi, and feet black." This bird measured, in the flesh, according to Mr. Ayres's note, as follows :—" Total length 8 inches, bill (from gape)  $1\frac{1}{16}$ , tarsus  $1\frac{7}{16}$ , wing  $4\frac{3}{8}$ , tail (barely)  $3\frac{1}{4}$ ." In coloration this specimen resembles the female previously described ; but the black portions of the plumage are not so dark and much less lustrous, especially the crown of the head and the nape of the neck, and also the primaries and secondaries, all of which are dark brown rather than black ; the black centres of the white wing-coverts, and also the white spot near the origin of the bastard wing, are more conspicuous than in the last-named specimen, from which the present one likewise differs in the presence of a brownish-white mark extending from the base of the culmen to the eye and of a few very minute white specks just below the eye, also in some of the feathers of the back exhibiting very minute white tips and in the upper tail-coverts being wholly white ; there is also in this specimen a considerably less proportion of white on the abdomen above the tibiae, the feathers on that part being black faintly tipped with white.

A fourth example, shot on the same day and in the same locality as the preceding one, has the following memorandum attached to it by Mr. Ayres :—

" *Female*. Total length  $7\frac{7}{8}$ , bill (from gape)  $1\frac{1}{16}$ , tarsus  $1\frac{3}{8}$ , wing  $4\frac{3}{8}$ , tail  $3\frac{1}{8}$ . Iris dusky ; bill, tarsi, and feet black."

This specimen is even more brown and less black than the preceding one, especially on the under surface ; but on the abdomen and tibiae the feathers have blackish centres, concealed by brown or whity-brown margins ; the chin is sprinkled with small spots of a similar whity-brown tint ; but there is no whitish line between the bill and the eye, and no white on the wing, the feathers of the lesser coverts being blackish brown with brownish-grey edgings ; the upper tail-coverts and tail resemble those of the preceding specimen, except that all the rectrices, other than the two central pairs, are more uniformly and decidedly tipped with brown than is the case in the bird last described.

Mr. Sharpe has kindly examined these four specimens, all of which he considers to be referable to *S. leucomelæna*; but assuming this identification to be correct, I confess to feeling very doubtful as to whether *S. leucomelæna* and *S. monticola* are not, in reality, one and the same species.

I also observe that the white on the wing of all these specimens, except in the fourth (which is apparently a younger bird), is disposed in a manner exceedingly similar to the white coverts and adjacent small white spot in the wing of the Ash-backed Wheatear, for which I proposed the specific name "*tephronota*" in 'The Ibis' for 1877, p. 343, and that this is also a bird of very similar dimensions. I think it not unlikely that *S. tephronota* may ultimately prove to be merely a grey phase of the same species.—J. H. G.]

BUDYTES FLAVA (Linn.). Grey-headed Yellow Wagtail.  
Male, shot 3rd January.

BUDYTES RAYI, Bon. Ray's Wagtail.  
Male and female, shot 3rd January.

294. MONTICOLA BREVIPES, Waterh. Short-footed Rock-Thrush.

Male and female, shot near Potchefstroom, in the month of August, by my brother, Mr. John Ayres.

[The sexes of this pair of birds appear to have been ascertained by Mr. John Ayres, having been marked by him on the tickets attached to them. The measurements of the two skins are as under :—

|        | Culmen. | Wing. | Tail. | Tarsus. | Middle<br>toe, s. u. |
|--------|---------|-------|-------|---------|----------------------|
|        | in.     | in.   | in.   | in.     | in.                  |
| ♂ .... | ·75     | 4·4   | 2·5   | 1       | ·8                   |
| ♀ .... | ·75     | 4·1   | 2·3   | 1       | ·8                   |

The female specimen appears to be somewhat the older bird of the two, and agrees with the description of the male given in 'Contributions to Ornithology' for 1852, p. 147, but has the middle pair of rectrices blackish brown with ferruginous bases, the latter colour extending further on the sides of the feather than in the centre; the other feathers of the tail



are ferruginous, but some of them are very slightly and irregularly edged with blackish brown on the outer webs towards the tips.

The male specimen differs from the female in having the crown of the head of a somewhat darker grey, and also in the rectrices (other than the central pair) showing more blackish brown on the outer webs, which is especially the case with the external pair.—J. H. G.]

PYCNONOTUS NIGRICANS (Vieill.). Brunoir Bulbul.

Male, shot 11th January, at Potchefstroom. Total length 8 inches, bill (from gape)  $\frac{15}{16}$ , tarsus 1, wing  $3\frac{3}{4}$ , tail  $3\frac{3}{4}$ . Irides bright reddish hazel; eyelids orange; bill black; tarsi and feet black. Contents of stomach, grapes.

Female, shot 18th May, at Potchefstroom. Irides bright reddish hazel; eyelids yellow; bill black; tarsi and feet very dark ash-colour, nearly black.

[The plumage of these specimens agrees with the description given under the head of *P. nigricans* in the first edition of Mr. Layard's work. In the female killed on the 18th of May, which had nearly moulted, the head is decidedly black; in the male killed on the 11th of January the plumage is worn and faded, and the head, though black, is slightly tinged with brown; but in neither specimen does the colour of the head agree with the description given in the second edition of Mr. Layard's book under the head of *P. capensis*.—J. H. G.]

295. LANIARIUS GUTTURALIS (Müll.). Bachakiri Shrike.

Male in immature plumage, shot 23rd April, on the rocky ranges near Potchefstroom. Stomach contained locusts and grasshoppers.

ENNEOCTONUS COLLURIO (Linn.). Red-backed Shrike.

Male (adult), shot 26th December, on the rocky ranges near Potchefstroom.

Female, shot the following day, also on the rocky ranges.

296. JUVA BICOLOR (Gmel.). White-rumped Grakle.

Male and female, shot at Potchefstroom, 10th January. Stomachs contained apple.

297. *HYPHANTORNIS AURIFRONS* (Temm.). Golden-crowned Weaver-bird.

Male, shot at Potchefstroom, 8th January. Total length  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches, bill (from gape)  $\frac{15}{16}$ , tarsus  $1\frac{1}{8}$ , wing  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , tail  $2\frac{1}{4}$ . Irides pale tawny yellow; bill black; tarsi and feet pale yellowish. Stomach contained fruit.

Another male, shot at Potchefstroom, 28th January, from amongst a swarm of *Euplectes oryx*. Total length 7 inches, bill (barely)  $\frac{15}{16}$ , tarsus  $1\frac{3}{16}$ , wing  $3\frac{5}{8}$ , tail  $2\frac{1}{4}$ . Iris very pale chrome-yellow; bill nearly black, but greenish yellow at the base; tarsi and feet pale. Contents of stomach, figs:

[The specimen shot on the 8th of January appears to be in full breeding-plumage; but that killed on the 28th has the reddish-golden tint on the crown of the head interspersed with a few minute blackish-olive spots, which, with the colour of the bill, probably indicate that the bird was not in entirely complete breeding-dress when shot.

These two skins have been submitted to the examination of Mr. R. B. Sharpe, who has kindly informed me that he considers them to be referable to *H. aurifrons*.—J. H. G.]

*EUPLECTES ORYX*, Swains. Greater Bishop Weaver-bird.

Male, in full winter dress.

I killed, at one shot, on the 8th of May, this bird and its female, whilst busily engaged in building a partially constructed nest, which it is very certain they would have had to leave, as the frosts of winter are now upon us, and, moreover, all birds here have assumed their winter garb.

*HABROPYGA SUBFLAVA* (Vieill.). Sanguineous Finch.

Male, adult, shot at Potchefstroom, 15th June. Irides scarlet; bill crimson, with the ridge and gonys dusky; tarsi and feet light dusky brown. At this time of the year in numbers.

Immature, sex uncertain, shot 13th July. Irides light dusky tawny; bill black; tarsi and feet dusky ash-colour. In small flights.

Female, adult, shot 24th August. Irides pale scarlet; bill scarlet, but with the gonys, ridge, and a spot at the base of the upper mandible black; tarsi and feet pale dusky brown.

Male, adult, shot 23rd October. Irides bright scarlet; bill crimson, but dusky on the ridge and gonys; tarsi and feet dusky, pale. Contents of stomach, grass-seeds.

[In the immature bird, shot on the 13th of July, the bill is only about three quarters of the length of the bill in the adult.—J. H. G.]

ORTYGOSPIZA POLYZONA (Temm.). Little Barred-breasted Finch.

Female, shot near Potchefstroom, 6th April. Irides bright reddish hazel; upper mandible dusky brown; under mandible crimson; tarsi and feet pale.

Male, shot 30th April. Irides bright hazel; bill bright crimson; tarsi and feet pale.

This pretty little fellow I shot as he rose from the nest, where he was evidently doing duty for his wife, by sitting on the eggs in her absence. The nest was a very rough structure, placed on the ground amongst the grass and not easily seen, from its being composed of dead blades of grass; it was lined with a few coarse feathers, and in shape was much like the nests of some of the Sunbirds, with a projecting eave over the entrance, but all very rough. The eggs were five in number and pure white; length  $\frac{17}{32}$  inch, breadth  $\frac{15}{32}$ .

298. FRINGILLARIA VITTATA, Swains. Rock-Bunting.

Male, shot 20th February, at Potchefstroom. Total length  $6\frac{3}{4}$  inches, bill (from gape)  $\frac{7}{16}$ , tarsus  $\frac{15}{16}$  (barely), wing  $3\frac{1}{4}$ , tail  $2\frac{7}{8}$ . Irides dark hazel; bill dusky, the under mandible paler towards the gape; tarsi and feet dusky, soles of feet pale.

Female, shot 26th December, on the rocky ranges near Potchefstroom. Total length  $6\frac{1}{4}$  inches, bill  $\frac{1}{2}$ , tarsus  $\frac{15}{16}$ , wing 3, tail  $2\frac{1}{2}$ . Irides dusky; bill dusky bluish horn-colour; tarsi and feet light dusky.

[Mr. Ayres has affixed to one of the skins sent the English name of "Rock-Bunting," which I have therefore retained.—J. H. G.]

299. PYRRHULAUDA VERTICALIS, Smith. White-crowned Finch-Lark.

Male, shot in August, in the Marico district.



MEGALOPHONUS ERYTHROCHLAMYS (Strickl.). Rufous-mantled Lark.

Two males, shot 2nd November, on the rocky ranges near Potchefstroom. Total length  $7\frac{7}{8}$  inches and 8 inches respectively, bill (from gape) 1 and  $1\frac{1}{16}$ , tarsus  $1\frac{3}{16}$  and  $1\frac{1}{4}$ , wing  $4\frac{1}{8}$  and  $4\frac{1}{4}$ , tail 3. Rises a short distance, and utters a prolonged "whew" whilst descending. The stomach of one of these specimens contained insects.

Two females, one shot in the same locality and on the same day as the two males, the other on 20th June. Total length of one specimen  $7\frac{1}{8}$  inches (the other bird not measured in the flesh), bill (from gape) in each about  $\frac{7}{8}$ , tarsus  $1\frac{1}{8}$ , wing  $3\frac{5}{8}$  and  $3\frac{7}{10}$  respectively, tail  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in each.

Irides, in both sexes, light dusky hazel; bill dusky, but the under mandible pale; tarsi and feet pale brown.

PTEROCLES GUTTURALIS, Smith. Sombre Sand-Grouse.

Male and female, adult, and female, immature.

I shot these three birds in company, on some peaty ground near the bank of the river, on the 21st November, at which season it is unusual to see them here. The three consisted, evidently, of an old pair with one young one about two thirds grown.

[The young bird, though not fully grown, is fully feathered, and resembles the adult female in coloration, though the transverse black and brown markings on the mantle are smaller and finer.—J. H. G.]

COTURNIX COMMUNIS, Bonn. European Quail.

Male, shot near Potchefstroom, 28th March, 1877.

Quails are here in great numbers at this time, and young birds three parts grown are often flushed.

300. EUPODOTIS CAFFRA (Licht.). Stanley Bustard.

Female, shot near Potchefstroom, 14th May. Weight 9 lb. Total length  $35\frac{1}{2}$  inches, bill (from gape)  $3\frac{1}{4}$ , tarsus  $6\frac{3}{4}$ , wing  $18\frac{1}{2}$ , tail  $10\frac{1}{2}$ . Irides light brown; bill dusky horn-colour, with the basal part of the lower mandible and the commissure pale bluish; tarsi and feet ochraceous white.

This bird was one of five which were feeding in an open

valley. It was exceedingly fat, and the stomach was loaded with beetles and berries.

[Mr. E. C. Buxton, who met with this species in the course of a journey from Natal to the Labomba mountains, has favoured me with the following note respecting it:—"In the breeding-season the throat of the male is enormous, and it plays like a Blackcock. You may then see it a great distance; it looks snow-white, from its turning all its feathers inside out."—J. H. G.]

*ÆGIALITIS VARIA* (Vieill.). Kittlitz's Plover.

Male, shot 22nd August.

This species migrates to this part of the country during the present month for the purpose of breeding; it is found sparsely in pairs, frequenting stony and tussocky ground where vegetation is scanty, and generally at no great distance from water; it disappears during the winter months. The stomachs of this bird and its mate (killed at the same time) contained insects, principally a species of white ant. From the size of the eggs in the ovary of the hen bird, I have no doubt she would have laid in a few days.

*ARDEA ARDESIACA*, Wagl. Lesser African Schistaceous Heron.

Male, adult, shot 21st February. Total length 20 inches, bill (from gape)  $3\frac{3}{8}$ , tarsus  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , wing (barely) 10, tail (barely)  $3\frac{3}{4}$ . Irides dusky hazel-brown; bill black; bare skin about the eye and base of bill black; tarsi and shanks black; feet gamboge-yellow, greenish just above the junction of the toes, claws black. Stomach contained remains of very small fish.

This beautiful Heron has a curious habit, whilst feeding, during the heat of the day and when the sun shines blazing hot, of throwing one wing suddenly forward and holding it out, so that it shades a small portion of shallow water; the bird immediately peers into the water searchingly, and invariably makes a dart at some unlucky little fish. In the specimen sent the tips of the primaries are worn; and without doubt this comes from the wing being so constantly thrown forward against rough grass and plants.

ARDEOLA COMATA (Pall.). Squacco Heron.

Male, shot 3rd January. Stomach contained grasshoppers.

301. BUTORIDES ATRICAPILLA (Afzel). Black-capped Dwarf Heron.

Female, shot in August. Irides yellow, as is also the bare skin round the eye; the upper mandible of the bill black, the lower yellow and brown.

This species frequents trees on the banks of the River Marico.

ARDETTA PODICEPS, Bon. Rufous-necked Little Bittern.

Male, immature, shot at Potchefstroom 3rd January. Total length  $13\frac{3}{4}$  inches, bill from gape  $2\frac{3}{8}$  [from culmen 1.65.—J. H. G.], tarsus  $1\frac{7}{8}$ , wing 5, tail  $1\frac{7}{8}$ . Irides pale greenish yellow; bill dusky along the ridge and commissure, elsewhere pale yellowish; tarsi and feet pale greenish yellow. Stomach contained grasshoppers.

[Mr. Ayres sends a second specimen, shot at Potchefstroom on the 29th of April by Mr. W. Lucas, who has marked it as a female; but it appears by its plumage to be a male just commencing the assumption of the adult dress. It measures as follows:—Bill from gape 2.2 inches, from culmen 1.65, tarsus 1.7, wing 5.1.—J. H. G.]

302. ARDETTA MINUTA (Linn.). European Little Bittern.

Sex uncertain, shot at Potchefstroom, 18th February, 1872.

[This specimen was sent to me by Mr. Ayres soon after it was shot, and I then considered it to be an example of *A. podiceps*; but having recently carefully reexamined it, and compared it with other specimens, I believe it to be an adult female of the true *A. minuta*; and Mr. Sharpe, to whom I have submitted it, agrees with me in this opinion. Its principal measurements are:—Bill from gape 2.5 inches, from culmen 1.8, tarsus 1.7, wing 5.7.

The British Museum contains two South-African Little Bitterns, in similar plumage to this specimen, both of which appear from their dimensions to be referable to *A. minuta*



rather than to *A. podiceps*. One of these was obtained in the Cape Colony by the late Sir A. Smith; the exact locality of the other is unknown.—J. H. G.]

—NUMENIUS PHÆOPUS (Linn.). Common Whimbrel.

[Mr. Ayres has forwarded the specimen recorded in 'The Ibis' for 1877, p. 350; and I am therefore now able to confirm his identification of it.—J. H. G.]

TOTANUS GLAREOLA (Linn.). Wood-Sandpiper.

Female, shot 21st January, at Potchefstroom, amongst a flock of *Chera progne*, three of which were killed at the same shot. The stomach contained insects.

303. TRINGA MINUTA, Leisl. Little Stint.

Male, shot at Potchefstroom, 10th April.

Female, shot there, 23rd October.

[The male bird, shot on the 10th of April, is just commencing the assumption of its breeding-dress; the female, shot on the 23rd of October, has almost entirely lost it.—J. H. G.]

GALLINAGO ÆQUATORIALIS, Rüpp. African Snipe.

Female, shot 14th July.

I shot this bird in mid air, in the act of making that curious neighing noise with the rapid beat of the wings which, till then, I always thought was produced by the cock bird only.

These Snipes are now commencing to breed.

LIMNOCORAX NIGER (Gmel.). Black Crake.

Female, shot at Potchefstroom, 12th June. Total length  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Irides bright crimson; eyelids rose-red; bill light greenish yellow; tarsi and feet deep rose-red.

The colours of the bill, tarsi, and feet are most beautifully vivid. All these beautiful little water-birds—Rails, Water-hens, &c.—seem now to be in tip-top plumage, uttering their quaint notes and chasing each other about amongst the reeds and sedges.